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## THREE NOTABLE DREAMS

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I have been a dreamer from my earliest childhood. My dreams have been of all kinds, from the most fantastic and grotesque to those that were orderly and coherent; but I have never had any others like those which I am about to describe. My ordinary dreams often take the form of short stories or adventures of various kinds; among them is one recurrent dream in which I find myself in some house in the Middle West, very hospitably entertained by hosts to whom I am an unwelcome guest. I try to go home, but eastward-bound trains are difficult to reach and the baggage-express is never available. Such experiences seem to have no important meaning. Commonly they fade with the coming of daylight and make no definite or deep impression on the mind.

Set apart from all such commonplace dreams are three visions of the night which came in quick succession, and left me, on awaking in the morning, deeply impressed with a sense of the supernatural. I have no belief that they were revelations having any source outside of my own mind and experience; but they gave me a clue to the understanding of those things that happened of old when in a dream some important revelation was made to a patriarch or prophet; and, whatever their source, they wrought a change in my thought and feeling concerning the reality and nature of the future life that still abides and after five years makes the thought of an incorporeal existence seem perfectly natu-

ral and very attractive. They have also made me understand some events in ancient history, and have given a new meaning to the belief that dreams were the favorite channels through which the divine wisdom flowed into human life.

What I have to relate happened in this wise: being in a hospital five years ago, recovering from a desperate illness, I awoke three mornings in succession with the memory of dreams vivid and ineffaceable. The three dreams were all of the same class and in structure and substance entirely unlike any that have come to me before or since. They were visual representations of passages of Scripture and some other materials skilfully selected and put together so as to make a rational and intelligible presentation of the meaning they were intended to convey. One peculiarity of them all was that time and space were identical, so that to go back in time was exactly similar to a movement in space. Figures of speech became visual realities, and without the aid of sound, knowledge was conveyed to the mind at every moment. As the Psalmist wrote about the utterances of the day and night, "There is no speech nor language, their voice is not heard"; so I found it when exploring the universe, except in one case, which I am about to describe.

My first dream began with a vision. I was looking into the distance in a vast hall which I knew to be one of the "corridors of time." It extended from me to the beginning of the Christian Era. When I see pictures of ancient halls, temples, crypts, and cloisters I am often reminded of my dream, although I never see anything more grand and imposing than this vast "corridor." It was filled with dusky light and shade, and seemed to be exceedingly dry and salubrious. As I gazed in wonder, suddenly all the air became vibrant with the tones of a strong musical voice saying, "Be of good cheer; I have

overcome the world." I answered, "I am of good cheer; for I also have overcome the world." Then I awoke, and behold, it was a dream. But the impression left reminded me of Wordsworth's vision of the morning, after which he says, "On I walked in thankful blessedness, which yet survives."

The second dream came on the following morning. It was remarkable for the skill with which passages from the twenty-third Psalm and the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of Revelation were fitted together and then the completed whole visualized in a picture of extraordinary beauty. In my dream I stood on the bank of a river which stretched across a grassy plain for two or three miles. It was deep and still, "clear as crystal." The turf under my feet was green and soft. I was in green pastures beside still waters. The river flowing down through the landscape towards me was a broad band of silver; and at its source there was a city of such splendor and beauty as no painter could put on canvas. It seemed like one of Turner's Venetian pictures, only much more splendid because, as recorded in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of the Book of Revelation, the city from foundation to topmost stone was in all its parts of gold and jewels, representing everything that was rare and beautiful, so that walls and gates and roofs, "transparent as glass," reflected the light which was in itself the glory of God. This light which glorified the landscape was unlike sunshine because it was not yellow, and unlike the light of the moon because, although it had a silver radiance, it was at the same time softer and more intense than sunshine or moonlight upon natural landscapes. The river was the "water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God in the midst of the street thereof." On each side of the river was planted the tree of life, giving rare beauty to the landscape. As in wonder I

watched and communed with myself, I saw on the left of the river a deeply shaded highway. It ran between the tree of life on the right and an elevated woodland at the left. As I mused, I said, "This is the valley of the shadow of death"; and then I asked myself, "What is it that casts a shadow over the valley of death? Why certainly, it is the tree of life; without that there could be no death and no shade." The thought was wonderfully comforting, and I awoke from my dream cheered and exhilarated by the picture my subtle fancy had shaped out of biblical phrases.

My next dream, which caused me to awake on the third morning exclaiming to my nurse, "It was glorious," was unlike anything I had ever seen or imagined. When it began, I seemed to be standing on the verge of things solid and tangible. Before me, quite above the level line of vision, before a white background, were the figures 8,000,000,000. The figures were intensely black, and to me signified the fact that motion in the fields of light before me was at the rate of eight billion miles a second. At my left, near at hand, was a white casket; on the raised cover were the figures 5,000,000, which signified that the capacity of the casket was 5,000,000, but whether souls or bodies I did not know. Moved by some silent impulse, I crept into the casket; the cover came down; and, as it closed with a snap, the casket suddenly vanished, together with all that was corporeal in myself, and I, a disembodied intelligence, was looking out into a boundless universe in which nothing was to be seen or felt but oceans of light and infinite energy. I had no organs by which to see or hear or think, but my intelligence included everything. All that we know upon the earth by the use of our senses I could know as forms of thought; and so far as motion was concerned, I had only to think of any part of the universe, however distant, and instantly I was there. At one point, as I

swept through space where nothing was visible but waves of yellow light, recalling the description of the creation when wisdom was present, I was conscious, without seeing it, that we were passing over the "habitable parts of the earth." Soon after, in a vast distance of time and space, which were identical, I heard sublime strains of music and was instantly present "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." When I awoke, cheered and exhilarated by my dream, thoughts that had accumulated in my studies of physiological psychology and various speculations about the nature of mind, soul, and spirit, and the possibilities of the continuation of intelligence when the physical organs of the body were destroyed, crowded upon my mind and made me reflect, with a certainty that five years later, at the threshold of my eightieth year, I have never wholly lost, that consciousness in human beings is a fact to be accounted for, and that, in spite of all the physical facts which are cited to disprove the thesis, we may still assert that consciousness does something.

Many have taken in hand in our time to discuss theories of dreams and to account for the curious combinations made by the unconscious sleeper through some sleepless faculty of the mind; but nothing that I have ever heard or read in explanation of the act of dreaming furnishes me with an explanation of the skill shown in the selection and putting together in rational and beautiful forms of the scraps of sacred literature which had never been worked over in this way in my conscious moods. The sudden disappearance of all physical things in my last dream was probably a reminiscence of Shakespeare's wonderful description of the changes in Prospero's vision which would leave not a rack behind.

Occasionally I dream of attempting to preach, but nothing ever comes right. There are books in the form of Bibles and hymn books but nothing inside of them

which can be used in the pulpit. The desk is always unstable, and, after many vain attempts to conduct a service in a decorous manner, the audience always fades away. People who dream about their daily tasks commonly have similar experiences; nothing happens as it ought to happen, and the mind seems to be under the control of some perverse faculty. But in my three notable dreams everything was orderly, rational, beautiful, and consistent. He who can explain them will have found a clue to some of the mysteries of the human mind and to some of the phenomena of occultism and inspiration and revelation as they present themselves in the annals of religion.